GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE AND AGRICULTURE.

STATISTICS.

STATISTICS OF COFFEE CULTIVATION.

I. Area and Production.

At the end of 1894 there were 289,080 acres of land under coffee in India, all of it, with the exception of 10,746 acres in Burma, being in Southern India. The cultivation of coffee is in fact restricted for the most part to a limited zone in Mysore, Coorg, and the Madras Districts of Malabar and the Nilgiris. In Mysore there are 136,052 acres, in Coorg 71,181 acres, and in the Nilgiris and Malabar 45,652. If to these are added 6,587 acres in Travancore and Cochin, we find about 90 per cent of the coffee-bearing area of India concentrated in the hilly region above the South-western coast where the rainfall is heavy and the climate generally approximates to that of the coffee-bearing area of Ceylon.

In the Madras Presidency coffee is not grown to any extent except in the two districts already mentioned, and in Salem and Madura. The only other Province in which coffee is grown is Burma, mostly in Toungoo, and the industry there is of recent origin.

In the decade under review the area in the Madras Districts has fluctuated, remaining in 1894 at but little above the level of 1885. In Coorg there has been a sudden and large increase in 1894, in Mysore there has been a steady and considerable increase, while in Travancore and Cochin there has been no advance: in Travancore, indeed, many coffee growers have abandoned that industry for the less precarious cultivation of tea.

The yield has fluctuated greatly; in 1894 it was about 35½ million pounds, which was but little larger than in 1885, notwithstanding the increased acreage. Taking the figure 100 to represent both area and production in 1885, the ratio of yearly increase or decrease is shown in the subjoined table :-

	Area.	*Production.*
1885	100	100
1886	97	90
1887	103	109
1888	104	76
1889	110	85
1890	114	63
1891	111	113
1892	110	97
1893	116	118
1894	122	101

In 1894 the yield varied enormously in the different localities, the returns giving 472 lb. an acre in Toungoo; 351 lb. in the Nilgiris; 157 lb. in Mysore; 104 lb. in Coorg; 76 lb. in Malabar.

A noticeable feature in the returns is the record of a yield of 1,511 lbs. an acre in Cochin in 1893 followed by a yield of 175 lbs. in 1894. The brief explanation given by the local authorities is "that it appears that the crop in the previous year was good, and that a good crop is almost invariably followed by a poor one." It is not explained, however, why in Cochin in 1893 the yield should have been as large as 1,511 lbs. to the acre, when in the adjacent region of Travancore in the same year the yield was only 170 lbs., and in Malabar only 70 lbs. These would seem to be defects in the statistics, to which the attention of the local authorities might with advantage be directed.

II. Persons employed.

According to the returns there were, in 1894, 37,903 persons permanently and 118,014 temporarily employed on the coffee estates, making a total of 155,917 persons, which is equal to about one person (1·07) to two acres, while in tea estates the average is over 2½ persons to two acres. The difference is explained by the much greater labor required in the repeated plucking of tea and in the subsequent processes of preparing the leaf for the market.

III. Exports and Consumption.

The following figures are the average of the five years ending 1894-95 :—

Indian Coffee	Production	lbs.	34,444,087
	Exports	,,	31,595,514
	Left in India	,,	2,848,573
Foreign Coffee.	Imports	,,	1,820,426
	Re-exports	,,	585,245
	Left in India	,,	1,235,181

It appears, therefore, that nearly 92 per cent of the production is exported, and that of the coffee consumed in India, foreign coffee represents less than half the quantity of Indian coffee. The rate of consumption is little more than half that of tea, amounting to only lb. 0·014 per head of the population. It is said to be rather freely drunk by the native population in Southern India, but that is certainly not so in Northern India.

IV. Prices.

There is no trustworthy or complete record of the prices in India of Indian coffee ; and in answer to enquiries, I am informed that there are no materials for the preparation of a record of prices, and that the prices in fact depend upon and follow the fluctuations of prices in London of Ceylon plantation coffee, the price of Indian coffee being about 5s. less than the price of Ceylon coffee. This being so, the prices in London, in February of each year of the last twenty years of Ceylon coffee (plantation) are here subjoined :—

	Per cwt. s.	d.
1876	89	0
1877	85	3
1878	80	0
1879	64	0
1880	68	6
1881	59	0
1882	64	0
1883	74	0
1884	69	0
1885	54	6
1886	56	0
1887	77	0
1888	72	0
1889	90	0
1890	99	0
1891	104	6
1892	105	0
1893	108	0
1894	100	0
1895	104	0

Ten years, from 1879 to 1888, of depressed prices, combined with the havoc wrought by the borer and the leaf-disease, greatly discouraged coffee-planting in India and Ceylon, and the prospects of the industry seemed so forlorn that both in Ceylon and India much coffee land was placed under tea. In 1889, however, there was a sharp rise in prices, and the level has ranged high since that year under the operation of speculative corners, political troubles in Brazil, whence the main supplies of the world are derived, and other circumstances. The maintenance of prices at their present comparatively high level has given to the Indian coffee planter a stimulous and an encouragement which were greatly needed.

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